

congested condition within said output buffer comprises detecting a backpressure signal from said switching fabric.

4. (Unchanged) The data flow control method of claim 3, wherein said step of pausing data transmission from said input section is initiated in response to said input section receiving said backpressure signal.
5. (Unchanged) The data flow control method of claim 2, wherein said detection of congestion within said output buffer comprises the step of detecting a high level of occupancy within said output buffer.
6. (Unchanged) The data flow control method of claim 5, further comprising the steps of:  
monitoring said output buffer for an indication of congestion;  
detecting an indication of congestion within said output buffer;  
generating a congestion indication signal in response to said step of detecting an indication of congestion;  
delivering said congestion indication signal from said switching fabric to said input section;  
and  
pausing data transmission from said input section to said output section in response to said delivery of said congestion indication signal.
7. (Unchanged) The data flow control method of claim 1, wherein said step of delaying restart of data transmission further comprises computing a delay interval.
8. (Unchanged) The data flow control method of claim 7, wherein the duration of said computed delay interval varies inversely with said determined input buffer occupancy.
9. (Unchanged) The data flow control method of claim 1, further comprising the step of defining a plurality of occupancy levels, including a high level and a low level, each uniquely corresponding to a range of readable buffer occupancy values.

10. (Unchanged) The data flow control method of claim 9, wherein said data switch includes a plurality of input sections transmitting data to said congested output buffer, said method further comprising the steps of:

pausing data transmission from said input sections to said output section in response to a detection of congestion within said switching fabric or within said output section; and  
determining buffer occupancies of each of said input buffers during said pause.

11. (Unchanged) The data flow control method of claim 10, wherein said step of determining input buffer occupancies during said pause comprises the steps of:

reading an exact input buffer occupancy value for each of said input sections; and  
in accordance with said occupancy level definitions, assigning one of said occupancy levels to each of said input sections in response to said step of reading an exact input section buffer occupancy value.

12. (Unchanged) The data flow control method of claim 10, wherein said data switch further comprises an intelligent control device, and wherein said step of determining input buffer occupancies further comprises the steps of:

in a periodic manner within said intelligent control device:  
reading an input buffer occupancy value for each of said plurality of input sections;  
associating each of said input section buffer occupancy values with a buffer occupancy level; and  
assigning said occupancy levels to corresponding input sections.

13. (Unchanged) A data flow control system within a data switch having at least one input section which includes an input buffer from which said input section transmits data to an output section through a switching fabric, said data flow control system comprising:

means for pausing data transmission from said input section to said output section in response to a detection of congestion within said switching fabric or within said output section;  
means for determining input buffer occupancy of said input section during said pause; and  
means for delaying restart of data transmission from said input section to said output section

in accordance with said determined input buffer occupancy.

14. (Unchanged) The data flow control system of claim 13, wherein said data switch further includes an output buffer within said output section and switching fabric for routing data from said input section to said output section, and wherein said means for pausing data transmission from said input section further comprises:

means for detecting a congested condition within said output buffer; and

means for generating a backpressure signal within said switch fabric in response to detecting a congested condition within an output buffer.

15. (Unchanged) The data flow control system of claim 14, wherein said means for detecting a congested condition within said output buffer comprises means for detecting a backpressure signal from said switching fabric.

16. (Unchanged) The data flow control system of claim 15, wherein said means for pausing data transmission from said input section is initiated in response to said input section receiving said backpressure signal.

17. (Unchanged) The data flow control system of claim 14, wherein said means for detecting congestion within said output buffer comprises means for detecting a high level of occupancy within said output buffer.

18. (Unchanged) The data flow control system of claim 17, further comprising:

means for monitoring said output buffer for an indication of congestion;

means for detecting an indication of congestion within said output buffer;

means for generating a congestion indication signal in response to detecting an indication of congestion;

means for delivering said congestion indication signal from said switching fabric to said input section; and

means for pausing data transmission from said input section to said output section in response

to delivering said congestion indication signal.

19. (Unchanged) The data flow control system of claim 13, wherein said means for delaying restart of data transmission further comprises means for computing a delay interval.

20. (Unchanged) The data flow control system of claim 19, wherein the duration of said computed delay interval varies inversely with said determined input buffer occupancy.

21. (Unchanged) The data flow control system of claim 13, further comprising a plurality of defined occupancy levels, including a high level and a low level, each uniquely corresponding to a range of readable buffer occupancy values.

22. (Unchanged) The data flow control system of claim 21, wherein said data switch includes a plurality of input sections transmitting data to said congested output buffer, said system further comprising:

means for pausing data transmission from said input sections to said output section in response to a detection of congestion within said switching fabric or within said output section; and

means for determining buffer occupancies of each of said input buffers during said pause.

23. (Unchanged) The data flow control system of claim 22, wherein said means for determining input buffer occupancies during said pause comprises:

means for reading an exact input buffer occupancy value for each of said input sections; and

means for assigning one of said occupancy levels to each of said input sections in accordance with said occupancy level definitions.

24. (Unchanged) The data flow control system of claim 22, wherein said data switch further comprises an intelligent control device, and wherein said means for determining input buffer occupancies further comprises:

means for reading an input buffer occupancy value for each of said plurality of input sections;

means for associating each of said input section buffer occupancy values with a buffer

occupancy level; and

means for assigning said occupancy levels to corresponding input sections.

25. (Newly Presented) A data flow control method within a data switch having at least one input section which includes an input buffer from which said input section transmits data to an output section through a switching fabric, said data flow control method comprising the steps of:
- pausing data transmission from said input section to said output section in response to a detection of congestion within said switching fabric or within said output section;
  - determining input buffer occupancy of said input section during said pause; and
  - delaying restart of data transmission from said input section to said output section in accordance with said determined input buffer occupancy without regard to a data priority.